

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, TU

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE ERUPTS AT ECEVIT RALLY IN GEREDE

SUMMARY: VIOLENCE DISRUPTED A SPEECH BY RPP CHAIRMAN
BULENT ECEVIT IN GEREDE, TOUCHING OFF A ROUND OF ACCUSATIONS
AMONG TURKISH POLITICAL LEADERS OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
INCIDENT. EDITORIAL COMMENTS HAVE GENERALLY FOLLOWEDPARTISAN
LINES. END SUMMARY.

1. VIOLENCE BROKE OUT DURING A POLITICAL RALLY AT WHICH REPUBLICAN
PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) CHAIRMAN BULENT ECEVIT WAS SPEAKING IN
THE CENTRAL ANATOLIAN TOWN OF GEREDE (BOLU PROVINCE) ON JUNE 21.
THE FIGHTING, REPORTEDLY BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF ECEVIT AND
THE RIVAL NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), STARTED BEFORE THE
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RPP LEADER'S ARRIVAL AND CONTINUED WITH THE STONING OF ECEVIT'S

BUS, AN ATTACK ON THE SPEAKER'S ROSTRUM, AND REPORTED DAMAGE TO NEARBY SHOPS AND VEHICLES. FORTY PERSONS WERE INJURED AND TWENTY-THREE WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY TURKISH SECURITY FORCES.

2. THE INCIDENT RECEIVED WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN THE TURKISH PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION AND TOUCHED OFF A NEW ROUND OF CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES AMONG POLITICAL LEADERS OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUTBREAKS OF CIVIL VIOLENCE.

A. ECEVIT, SPEAKING AT AN ANKARA PRESS CONFERENCE ON JUNE 22, SAID THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENT AND ACCUSED IT OF "RISKING A CIVIL WAR" IN ORDER TO HANG ON TO POWER. THE RPP LEADER WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD "FALLEN INTO A TRAP" SET UP BY THE GOVERNMENT IN GEREDE AND CHARGED THAT THE BOLU PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES HAD FAILED TO TAKE THE NECESSARY SECURITY PRECAUTIONS DESPITE WARNINGS THAT TROUBLE MIGHT OCCUR. HE ALSO ACCUSED JUSTICE PARTY (JP) DEPUTY AHMET CAKMAK OF INSTIGATING THE DISTURBANCE.

B. FOR HIS PART CAKMAK DENIED ECEVIT'S CHARGE AND CLAIMED THAT THE RPP LEADER AND HIS DEPUTIES HAD PROVOKED THE CROWD THEMSELVES.

C. INTERIOR MINISTER OGUZHAN ASILTURK (SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NSP) TOLD JOURNALISTS UPON FIRST HEARING OF THE INCIDENT THAT NEWS REPORTS HAD BEEN EXAGGERATED AND THE NSP HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT.

D. PRIMIN SULEYMAN DEMIREL, MEANWHILE, EXPRESSED REGRET OVER THE INCIDENT, BUT DESCRIBED ECEVIT'S CHARGES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AS "UNJUST AND MALICIOUS." HE CONTINUED: "OFFICIAL AUTHORITIES ARE CONTINUING WITH THE INVESTIGATION. LET NO ONE DOUBT THAT THE FACTS WILL BE UNCOVERED. TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND ORDER IN THE COUNTRY IS NOT ONLY THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY BUT EVERYONE'S. I AM DEEPLY DISMAYED BY THE EVENT. I WILL SAY THIS MUCH FOR THE TIME BEING."

E. DEPUTY PRIMIN NECMETTIN ERBAKAN, THE LEADER OF THE NSP WHO WAS SPEAKING IN RIZE ON JUNE 22, SAID: "IN MY OPINION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ECEVIT HAS WRONG, MISTAKEN IDEAS, BUT HE IS A SON OF THE COUNTRY. SO WE CAN NEVER APPROVE OF BULLYING HIM."

F. HOWEVER, BEFORE LEARNING OF THE GEREDE INCIDENT ON JUNE 21, DEPUTY PRIMIN ALPASLAN TURKES, LEADER OF THE NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY (NAP), HAD ACCUSED THE RPP OF EXCEEDING THE "LIMITS OF MORALITY IN ITS INTRIGUES." HE SAID ECEVIT WAS "PLAYING WITH FIRE" AND HAD PROVOKED AND ENGAGED

IN DIVISIVE ACTIVITIES DURING A RECENT SPEAKING TOUR OF EASTERN TURKEY.

3. EDITORIAL COMMENTS HAVE GENERALLY FOLLOWED PARTISAN LINES.

A. PRO-JP SON HAVADIS SAID ECEVIT'S PROVOCATIONS HAD CAUSED THE GEREDİ INCIDENT, AND THAT HE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY IRRITATED AT LOSING POWER.

B. CONSERVATIVE DAILIES TERCÜMAN, GÜNEŞ AND MİLLİ GAZETE ALSO BLAMED THE DISTURBANCE ON ECEVIT.

C. MASS-CIRCULATION HURRIYET, HOWEVER, SAID THE DEMİREL GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PRESERVE DOMESTIC PEACE AND HAD PLACED THE REGIME IN DANGER, COUNTING 148 CLASHES BETWEEN EXTREME LEFTIST AND RIGHTIST GROUPS SINCE THE GOVERNMENT HAD COME TO POWER.

D. GÜNAYDIN, TURKEY'S SECOND LARGEST CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER, COMMENTED THAT THE ATTACKS WERE NOT RPT NOT AGAINST THE PERSON OF ECEVIT BUT AGAINST DEMOCRACY AND THE REGIME ITSELF, WHILE THE STATE SECURITY FORCES DID NOTHING.

E. MODERATELY-LEFTIST CUMHURİYET SAID THE NATIONALIST FRONT GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO IGNORE ECEVIT'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE. THE PAPER RECALLED A SIMILAR INCIDENT DIRECTED AGAINST FORMER RPP CHAIRMAN İSMET İNÖNÜ AT USAK AND TOPKAPI IN 1959, WHICH PROVOKED A "GREAT REACTION" FROM THE "DEMOCRATIC FORCES" IN THE COUNTRY.

F. PRO-RPP YENİ ULUS, HOWEVER, LINKED THE CONTINUATION OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN TURKEY TO US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND MEDITERRANEAN. THE COMMENTARY ACCUSED THE US OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WANTING TO SEE CIVIL STRIFE IN TURKEY IN ORDER TO COUNTER THE STRENGTH OF THE POLITICAL LEFT.

4. COMMENT: THIS IS THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF CIVIL DISORDER TO DATE DIRECTLY INVOLVING A TURKISH POLITICAL LEADER. THE READINESS WITH WHICH THE PARTIES HAVE ACCUSED EACH OTHER OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EVENT SUGGESTS THAT SUCH DISTURBANCES WILL CONTINUE TO BE A POLITICAL ISSUE BETWEEN THE DEMİREL GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION PARTIES.
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